



# Southwestern Idaho News

ADA, ADAMS, BOISE, CANYON, ELMORE, GEM, OWYHEE, PAYETTE, VALLEY & WASHINGTON COUNTIES

## LABOR FORCE UPDATE

The Boise-Nampa Metropolitan Statistical Area's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate held steady in September at 2.3 percent. That was six-tenths of a percentage point below a year ago. Over 9,000 more people were working than in September 2006. From August to September, the labor force and total employment both increased by 3,200 as area schools and universities began fall terms, area farms hired seasonal workers for the harvest and firefighters remained on payrolls longer than usual as wildfires persisted. With the unemployment rate holding well below the commonly considered full employment level of 4 percent, employers continue struggling to find workers. Working against them is the fact that wages have not increased enough to attract the additional workers employers want. The cost of living increases over the last several years have made pay scales of 10 years ago too low for today's economy. The area labor market is still a job seeker's market, but the lack of workers

**Southwestern Idaho Table 2: September 2007  
Seasonally Adjusted Labor Force Figures for  
Southwestern Idaho Counties**

	Civilian Labor Force	Number Unemployed	Percent Unem- ployed	Number Em- ployed
<b>Ada</b>	203,099	4,419	2.2	198,680
<b>Adams</b>	2,025	75	3.7	1,951
<b>Boise</b>	3,942	80	2.0	3,861
<b>Canyon</b>	84,834	2,122	2.5	82,713
<b>Elmore</b>	10,969	357	3.3	10,612
<b>Gem</b>	7,742	177	2.3	7,565
<b>Owyhee</b>	5,127	78	1.5	5,049
<b>Payette</b>	10,852	318	2.9	10,533
<b>Valley</b>	5,070	154	3.0	4,916
<b>Washington</b>	5,263	130	2.5	5,133
<b>Statewide</b>	769,725	17,868	2.3	751,857

**Southwestern Idaho Table 1: Boise City-Nampa MSA Labor Force & Employment (Ada, Canyon, Boise, Gem and Owyhee counties)**

	Sep 2007*	Aug 2007	Sep 2006	% Change	
				Last Month	Last Year
<b>INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>					
<i>Seasonally Adjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	304,800	301,600	297,300	1.1	2.5
Unemployment	6,900	6,900	8,500	0.0	-18.8
% of Labor Force Unemployed	2.3	2.3	2.9		
Total Employment	297,900	294,700	288,800	1.1	3.2
<i>Unadjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	302,800	301,500	292,300	0.4	3.6
Unemployment	5,200	6,200	7,200	-16.1	-27.8
% of Labor Force Unemployed	1.7	2.1	2.5		
Total Employment	297,600	295,300	285,100	0.8	4.4
<b>JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK</b>					
<b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**</b>	282,700	280,100	272,900	0.9	3.6
<b>GOODS-PRODUCING INDUSTRIES</b>	56,400	57,100	57,200	-1.2	-1.4
<i>Natural Resources &amp; Construction</i>	25,800	26,200	25,500	-1.5	1.2
Construction	25,400	25,800	25,200	-1.6	0.8
<i>Manufacturing</i>	30,600	30,900	31,700	-1.0	-3.5
Durable Goods	24,600	24,900	25,500	-1.2	-3.5
Wood Product Manufacturing	2,500	2,500	2,600	0.0	-3.8
Fabricated Metal Products Mfg.	1,600	1,600	1,600	0.0	0.0
Machinery Manufacturing	1,300	1,300	1,300	0.0	0.0
Computer & Electronic Manufacturing	14,000	14,100	15,000	-0.7	-6.7
Transportation Equipment Mfg.	2,300	2,300	2,300	0.0	0.0
Other Durable Goods	2,900	3,100	2,700	-6.5	7.4
Nondurable Goods	6,000	6,000	6,200	0.0	-3.2
Food Manufacturing	4,400	4,400	4,200	0.0	4.8
Printing & Related Support Activities	700	800	700	-12.5	0.0
Other Nondurable Goods	900	800	1,300	12.5	-30.8
<b>SERVICE-PROVIDING INDUSTRIES</b>	226,300	223,000	215,700	1.5	4.9
<i>Trade, Transportation, &amp; Utilities</i>	56,300	55,800	52,800	0.9	6.6
Trade	48,600	48,100	45,100	1.0	7.8
Wholesale Trade	13,000	12,600	12,100	3.2	7.4
Wholesalers, Durable Goods	6,900	7,000	6,900	-1.4	0.0
Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	4,100	4,000	3,800	2.5	7.9
Retail Trade	35,600	35,500	33,000	0.3	7.9
Food & Beverage Stores	4,800	4,700	4,700	2.1	2.1
General Merchandise Stores	7,300	7,300	6,800	0.0	7.4
All Other Retail Trade	23,500	23,500	21,500	0.0	9.3
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	7,700	7,700	7,700	0.0	0.0
Utilities	700	700	700	0.0	0.0
Transportation & Warehousing	7,000	7,000	7,000	0.0	0.0
<i>Information</i>	4,700	4,700	4,600	0.0	2.2
Telecommunications	1,500	1,500	1,400	0.0	7.1
<i>Financial Activities</i>	15,400	15,400	14,300	0.0	7.7
Finance & Insurance	10,700	10,800	9,900	-0.9	8.1
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	4,700	4,600	4,400	2.2	6.8
<i>Professional &amp; Business Services</i>	42,000	41,100	40,700	2.2	3.2
Professional, Scientific, & Technical	12,500	12,000	12,200	4.2	2.5
Management of Companies & Ent.	5,600	5,500	5,700	1.8	-1.8
Administrative & Support & Waste Mgmt.	23,900	23,600	22,800	1.3	4.8
<i>Educational &amp; Health Services</i>	33,400	32,900	32,000	1.5	4.4
Educational Services	2,300	2,300	2,400	0.0	-4.2
Health Care & Social Assistance	31,100	30,600	29,600	1.6	5.1
Hospitals	10,300	10,000	9,500	3.0	8.4
<i>Leisure &amp; Hospitality</i>	24,200	24,700	24,000	-2.0	0.8
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	2,400	3,000	3,200	-20.0	-25.0
Accommodation & Food Services	21,800	21,700	20,800	0.5	4.8
Accommodation	2,700	2,300	2,200	17.4	22.7
Food Services & Drinking Places	19,100	19,400	18,600	-1.5	2.7
<i>Other Services</i>	7,900	8,000	6,600	-1.3	19.7
<b>Total Government</b>	42,400	40,400	40,700	5.0	4.2
Federal Government	5,900	6,000	5,900	-1.7	0.0
State & Local Government	36,500	34,400	34,800	6.1	4.9
State Government	13,200	12,600	13,400	4.8	-1.5
State Government Education	4,200	3,600	4,600	16.7	-8.7
State Government Administration	9,000	9,000	8,800	0.0	2.3
Local Government	23,300	21,800	21,400	6.9	8.9
Local Government Education	15,000	12,900	13,300	16.3	12.8
Local Government Administration	8,300	8,900	8,100	-6.7	2.5

\* Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

willing to work at area wage rates has forced many employers to begin looking out of the area for employees. It is possible that this temporary lag in finding workers could slow employment growth for a short time until enough workers are recruited.

Nonfarm jobs in the metropolitan area increased by 2,600 from August and by 9,800 from September 2006. The monthly gain was especially notable because it included the loss of over 1,000 jobs at Micron Technology. Manufacturing continued its decline, shedding another 300 jobs, a third of them in computer and electronic product manufacturing. The manufacturing sector has struggled nationwide but until recently had been pretty healthy in southwestern Idaho. Further declines in this industry are possible, which could create an additional labor pool for other area manufacturers. Despite the problems in high-tech manufacturing, there are other industries in the manufacturing sector that are doing very well such as the more traditional metals fabricators.

September marked the beginning of fall, which also means the beginning of the school year. Both local and state governments added a significant number of jobs in education. State government education was up 600 in September and local government added 2,100 jobs. That put total nonfarm jobs 1,700 higher than September 2006. Public school payrolls reflect several new schools opening this year.

Health care had a good month, adding 500 new jobs as St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center opened its new facility in Eagle, and a number of dentists and family practitioners opened around the area. Construction began its seasonal decline a little early perhaps due to the slowdown in some sectors, especially housing. Overall, September was a good month in light of losses in manufacturing and construction. The economy added some quality jobs, particularly in health care, education and wholesale trade. The September 2007 civilian labor force and total employment figures for all 10 counties in southwestern Idaho are shown in Southwestern Idaho Table 2 on page 19.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### BOISE-NAMPA METRO AREA

- Micron Technology continued to lose hundreds of millions of dollars. The company reported its fiscal 2007 fourth quarter loss at \$158 million following a loss of \$225 million during the third quarter. Micron reported total 2007 losses at \$320 million. Top executives said they will continue to look at ways to lower overhead over the next 18 months, and employees at the company's subsidiary Spec-

tek in Nampa were forewarned that many job cuts are likely in the next year.

- MPC Computers of Nampa recently completed its purchase of Gateway Computer's professional business at a cost of approximately \$90 million. That gave MPC ownership of all of Gateway's products and services in the professional business markets. MPC also takes over Gateway's assembly facility in Tennessee and operations in Colorado and South Dakota. As a result of this deal, MPC plans to add 100 new employees at its Nampa facility.
- The Boise regional office of the U.S. Small Business Administration backed a record 1,030 loans valued at \$155 million during the 2007 federal budget year. That was a 25 percent increase in the number of loans over the last fiscal year and an 18 percent increase in loan value. Small business has grown rapidly since 2000 when the Boise office backed just 342 loans for \$52.7 million.
- The College of Western Idaho that was recently approved by voters will not be opening in January 2008 as initially hoped. A lack of accreditation and fashioning an agreement to work under Boise State University's accreditation caused the delay. The two-year community college wants Boise State to operate as a host institution until it gains its own accreditation. The cost of classes will range from \$15 to \$1,400. But the college has said that it expects traditional courses to cost about \$120 per credit hour.
- The first GARVEE bond road project proposed by former Gov. Dirk Kempthorne recently got under way. The six-mile stretch of Interstate 84 from Broadway Avenue to Eisenman Road is being repaved and should be completed by next summer.
- The Idaho Youth Ranch, a nonprofit agency serving children and families throughout Idaho, recently opened its 22<sup>nd</sup> store in Boise. The store is also the Youth Ranch's largest at 12,000 square feet. Another store is scheduled to open shortly in Garden City. The Idaho Youth Ranch has also announced plans to add two stores per year over the next few years.
- Another small Boise County community will be seeing a new development in the near future. Sharpe Enterprises LLC of Las Vegas has begun selling three to seven acre lots at its Elk Run community just south of Idaho City. Lot prices start at \$79,900, and 46 lots will make up the 214 acre development.

- The former Simplot ethanol manufacturing facility in Caldwell has reopened. Westway Holdings Corp. of New Orleans, a subsidiary of a London-based company, is producing up to 4,000 gallons of ethanol a day at the facility. Company officials expect the plant to produce up to five million gallons annually.
- Stevens-Henager College, a private college based in Utah, recently opened its new campus in Boise near the Edwards 21 Cinemas just off Interstate 84. The new building is 80,000 square feet, and the college plans to lease out the space it does not use. Stevens-Henager offers degrees in business, various medical programs, computer science and graphic arts with over 300 students.
- South Mountain Mines Inc. of Owyhee County has been acquired by Thunder Mountain Gold. In the acquisition, Thunder Mountain Gold received 17 underground silver mines in the South Mountain Mining District in Owyhee County.
- After 16 years, the College of Idaho in Caldwell has dropped Albertson from its name, restoring the name it held for a century. College officials believed that retaining the Albertson name made people think the private liberal arts school had no need for additional funding resources. In addition, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation recently donated \$50 million to the College of Idaho for the school's endowment fund.
- Nampa's Northwest Nazarene University is building a new 55,000-square-foot nursing education facility. The program has over 180 students after just six years of operation. The \$9 million facility is scheduled for completion in December 2008. In addition to the nursing program, it will house the computer science, biology, physics, chemistry and mathematics departments.
- Grocery store chain WinCo, which operates from Boise, recently announced plans for a 700,000-square-foot distribution center in east Boise near the former Associated Foods Distribution facility. Once completed, WinCo's distribution center will employ approximately 200 people.
- Longtime Idaho recreational vehicle dealer Bodily RV has been purchased by the largest dealer of recreational vehicles in the country, Freedom Roads/Camping World. Bodily RV has locations in Meridian and Idaho Falls and annual sales of over \$45 million. The new owner plans to expand the

current Meridian facility and increase staff by 30 to 35.

- Construction has started on the expansion of Mercy Medical Center's emergency room facilities. The project will add 11 new rooms to treat patients at a cost of \$6.2 million.

#### **ADAMS COUNTY**

- Brundage Mountain Resort is on schedule to have two new chairlifts operational for this year's ski season. One will open up 160 acres of mountain never opened to skiers before. In addition to the new terrain, the lifts will allow 3,600 more skiers an hour to access the mountain. The new lifts cost over \$3 million. They are the resort's largest investment in nearly 50 years.

#### **PAYETTE COUNTY**

- The Payette City Council recently voted to purchase approximately three acres directly adjacent to the city's wastewater treatment plant to allow for future expansion.

#### **VALLEY COUNTY**

- According to a local real estate broker, home prices in Valley County have begun coming down in a big way. Over the last several months, average prices have dropped by \$20,000 to \$30,000. Incomes not keeping pace with rising home prices in recent years is one of the reasons.
- Construction on phase one of the Alpine Village mixed use development in downtown McCall at the sight of the former Ridley's grocery store is under way. The first phase includes a quarter of the 100 planned residential units priced from \$300,000 and 17,000 square feet of office, restaurant and retail space.

#### **WASHINGTON COUNTY**

- Bucking the trend of most of the rest of southwestern Idaho, Washington County continues to issue building permits at a rapid pace. The county is well on its way to issuing over 100 building permits for the year. According to Washington County's planning and zoning administrator, there has been no slowdown in construction activity this year.

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